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**Inventory for
Manuscript Collection
MS-463**

**Donnell & McKown Statements,
Five-Mast Schooner *Marcus L. Urann*
Inclusive dates 1904 - 1907**

by
Nathan R. Lipfert

March 2016

One folder
Accession # 2006.087.01

A PART OF THE CAPTAIN W. J. LEWIS PARKER BEQUEST

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Abstract

Donnell & McKown

Statements, five-mast schooner *Marcus L. Urann*, 1904-1907

One folder

Ship chandlers and shipping agents of Boston (MA).

Statements of income and expense prepared for each voyage of the five-mast schooner *Marcus L. Urann* during the period it was owned by Donnell & McKown. Typical of dividend statements prepared for vessel shareholders.

Bequeathed by Capt. W. J. Lewis Parker in 2006.

MS-463, Accession # 2006.087.01

Finding aid in repository; folder level control.

Related material in repository

Added Entries—Corporate bodies (including vessels)

Donnell & McKown

Marcus L. Urann (Five-mast schooner)

Added Entries—People

Blair, Robert F., *Captain*

Purdy, Blake G.

Added Entries—Places

Boston (MA)

Added Entries—Key terms

Coal trade

Ice trade

Sugar trade

Acquisition

These Donnell & McKown records were part of a large collection bequeathed to Maine Maritime Museum from the estate of Captain W. J. Lewis Parker in November and December 2006.

Provenance

Captain Parker was an extremely knowledgeable collector. He picked up many parts of his collection of maritime papers by purchase from dealers, auctions, or estate sales, or by gifts from relatives of maritime figures. We have found no documentation of how he acquired this particular group of manuscripts. One possibility is that he may have obtained them from Ada Minott Haggett, who donated the Minott Papers to the Museum. Since several of the Minotts were shareholders in the schooner *Marcus L. Urann*, Ada may have had multiple copies of these statements. The statements contain a large amount of useful information about schooner operation, and much can be understood from studying them. Captain Parker, in fact, loved to study them and spent hours with these and similar statements for other vessels. These

records were found in his study with similar items, and were part of his maritime library which he bequeathed Maine Maritime Museum.

Restrictions

There are no restrictions on the use of these materials for study or research. Researchers should seek permission to obtain copies, and for publication of any sort.

Physical Condition

Other than the usual surface dirt and minor tears, the manuscripts in this collection have no physical problems. Overall, these documents are in good condition.

Historical Note

Donnell & McKown were ship chandlers and ship agents, sometimes wholesale grocers or ship stores etc., in Boston. The address is given as 196 Commercial in Boston city directories around 1905. Letterheads from 1906 in MS-90, the Charles V. Minott Shipyard Records, give the address as 5 Commercial Wharf.

Donnell & McKown were managing owners or agents for the *Marcus L. Urann*, a five-mast schooner built in 1904 by Charles V. Minott Jr. at Phippsburg, from 1904 until 1907. Some shareholders, including Marcus L. Urann and his friends, evidently had been under the impression that Minott was going to manage the schooner himself, and never had much confidence in Donnell & McKown. Captain Robert Blair, in command of the *Urann*, also had professional differences with Donnell & McKown.

After fighting off two management take-over attempts, one from Urann and one from an outside party, Donnell & McKown ultimately encouraged shareholders to sell out to John G. Crowley, manager of Coastwise Transportation Co. of Boston. This sale occurred in 1907, and is reflected in the vessel's listing in the 1908 *Record of American and Foreign Shipping*, and in Crowley's listing in the owners' section of the *Record*. Curiously, Donnell & McKown also continued to list *Urann* as one of their vessels in their entry in the *Record*, right up until their last listing in 1913. This may have been an error of the compilers of the *Record*, however, since McKown died in 1909. The *Urann* continued sailing from the homeport of Boston until being abandoned in the North Atlantic on November 3, 1916, while loaded with lumber. Nine of the crew died; three survived to reach the Azores.

Of the two partners, the senior is less well-known. Joseph S. Donnell was born in York (ME) in February 1861. In the 1880 census (his family had by then moved to Charlestown, outside of Boston), aged 18, his occupation was "sailor." He would later claim to have been an officer aboard vessels, but little is known of that time in his life. He evidently maintained connections in Maine, for in 1894 he married schoolteacher Jennie C. Snow of Orland, at Winterport (ME). His occupation then was given as grocer, and he would give either grocer or merchant as an occupation until the 1920 census, when "none" is entered as his occupation. He died October 26, 1920.

In contrast, Leroy Kimball McKown was from a true seafaring family; his father and brother were both master mariners. He was born July 30, 1871 at Boothbay (ME), and rose to command schooners himself. According to Marcus L. Urann, he was thought to be the more knowledgeable partner, in terms of maritime knowledge, and some of the shareholders in the *Urann* were dismayed when he took another command in 1905, despite assurances he was remaining part of the partnership and that his schooner would be in Boston frequently. Unfortunately, McKown's schooner, the *Davis Palmer* (five-masts, built at Bath's Percy & Small shipyard in 1905), was lost with all hands (captain plus 11) in a wild winter gale in Broad Sound, Boston Harbor on the day after Christmas, 1909. Poignantly, the McKown family offered a reward for the recovery of the body, described as being 5'9", about 180 pounds, and clean shaven.

The man who actually compiled these financial records has been identified as probably Blake Garfield Purdy, a young Canadian from New Brunswick who immigrated in the 1890s, as did his wife Elizabeth. In the first decade of the 20th century, Boston city directories list him as a bookkeeper at 5 Commercial Wharf. He is mentioned (by surname only) in at least one of the MS-90 letters as also being involved in Donnell & McKown's efforts to fight off takeover attempts. By 1910, he appears to be at the same site as treasurer of the Purdy Towboat Co., presumably as Donnell & McKown fade away. Purdy was born August 16, 1881 at Jemsey, New Brunswick, and died August 8, 1958 at Hingham (MA).

Scope and Content Note

The entire record group is in one folder, filed in a multi-collection box. There is a group of 20 typed original statements, #2 - #21 complete (Jan. 14, 1905 - Oct. 16, 1906) and a group of 22 copies of statements, #1 - #26 (December 17, 1904 - April 20, 1907), missing #2, #13, #14, #20, and #25, with two copies of #23. Because most of the missing copies are included among the originals, the only statement missing in this record group is #25 (#25 is included in MS-90, box 121, folder 12). All the statements except #1 have the typewritten signature, "By Purdy."

There were many Purdys in Boston in the early 1900s, but Blake Garfield Purdy is the only one associated with 5 Commercial Wharf. There were several Purdys who were bookkeepers, but again Blake is the only one of them associated with 5 Commercial Wharf. We are relatively confident he is the one who created these statements.

The original statements are typed on the backs of stationery for The China Navigation Co., Ltd. They include a list of expenses incurred at the loading port, expenses at the delivery port, freight (income) at the delivery port, the dividend (profit) to be divided among the owners, and the latest intelligence on where the vessel is and what she is doing next. The dividend is always an amount evenly divisible by 64 (number of shares), with a small remainder carried over to the next voyage. The statements contain a large amount of useful information about schooner operation, and much can be understood from studying them.

The copies (possibly mimeograph copies) have all been folded up small, the size of typical dividend envelopes mailed out to schooner shareholders, each envelope containing a statement and the dividend check.

The cargoes documented are mostly coal, but include a few ice trips and one sugar cargo.

Because of the presence of the originals along with the copies which have evidently been mailed to a shareholder, it is possible that these may be Captain McKown's own papers. Another possibility is that Captain Parker may have gotten these from Ada Haggett, the Minott descendent who donated the Minott papers to Maine Maritime Museum. Since several of the Minott were individual shareholders, Ada may have had extras of the statements. We don't know why she would have had the originals, though. Whoever it was, they likely sold their share in the vessel when Coastwise Transportation bought the controlling share in 1907 – thus, there are no subsequent statements.

Additional information can be found in MS-90, the Charles V. Minott Shipyard Records, boxes 120 and 121, containing the records of the building and operation of the five-mast schooner *Marcus L. Urann*. In particular, the correspondence files in box 121 contain revealing comments on the relationships among the managing owners and major shareholders of a vessel.